

Today, Rep. Pete Stark introduced a resolution "To Protect Private Decisions About Marriage." The resolution would express the sense of Congress that government should not be involved in personal decisions about marriage. The resolution is in response to the Bush Administration proposal to allocate \$300 million for promoting marriage in this year's welfare reauthorization bill.

"The decision to marry is one of the most personal and important decisions that many of us will make in our lifetime," Rep. Stark said. "When making this decision, some Americans turn to their friends and family, while others turn only to their future partner. No one, however, turns to the government. And for good reason! Government interference in decisions about marriage is simply not warranted."

The American people agree. According to a recent Pew Research Center study, 79% of Americans believe the government should not develop programs to encourage people to marry or remain married. Furthermore, according to the same poll, 66% of Americans who identify themselves as strongly religious believe the government should not interfere in decisions about marriage.

Rep. Stark continued, "Government interference in promoting or coercing people to marry could also have unintended, tragic consequences. According to a joint report by the Departments of Justice and Health and Human Services, 25% of women said they have been raped or physically assaulted by their current or former spouse. More alarming still, research shows that 60% of women on welfare have suffered from domestic violence. As these statistics confirm, if government were to encourage or coerce welfare couples to get married, it would not guarantee a healthier or safer family, and could endanger the lives of mothers and children."

The welfare reauthorization bill moving through Congress includes a Bush Administration proposal to allocate \$300 million to promote marriage among welfare recipients. This proposal takes needed money away from programs that really do create more stable and healthy families. An overwhelming obstacle for welfare parents looking for jobs is the lack of quality, affordable childcare for their children. Providing better, stable childcare has proven to help working adults stay employed, which leads to more stable marriages and families. This applies to healthcare and job training as well.

Rep. Stark said, "By providing better childcare, healthcare and job training, we can equip poor parents with the tools they need to strengthen their families. The Republican bill diverts money from these important programs toward coercing people to get married. If we really want to

strengthen families and help raise people out of poverty, then we need to spend our money on programs that work.”

Rep. Stark concluded: “The Bush Administration’s marriage promotion proposal is misguided, potentially harmful, and not supported by the American people. My resolution clearly states that government resources should not be used to influence private decisions about marriage. I hope my colleagues will join with me in supporting this important resolution.”